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ABSTRACT

Changes in adult education since the end of World War II have been brought about less by adult education itself than by politics and the economy. The historiography of education is no longer considered a mere history of the ideas and literature of education but instead as social history. For research into the history of adult education, use of different historical perspectives is recommended, including the history of the institutions of adult education, a history of personalities, a history of social corporations that run adult education institutions, the political history of adult education, the history of the ideology, everyday history or the presentation and interpretaion of practical adult education, and a comparative history that considers the international context of adult education. Some tendencies are evident today in the system of adult education practiced in the western industrialized states, such as the growing numbers of adults, shift in emphasis to older adults in adult education, emphasis on vocationally oriented adult education, pragmatism, transition to adult education, increase in adults in higher education, and more adult education in universities. On a national as well as international basis, experts should find a reasonable strategy for collecting those materials that can give a real view of the practice of adult education and that can be used to develop archives. (YLB)

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The History of Adult Education since 1945: Research Problems

Abstract

In the four decades since 1945 the importance and efficiency of adult education has increased in many countries, and adult education has been integrated as an essential sector into the education system.

The research into the history of adult education should use the new methods of social and everyday history. Not only should the literature on adult education be investigated, but also the daily experiences of participants and educators, and the successes and faults of teaching and learning. The history of adult education is also a part of the political and economic history, not only the history of ideas but also of institutions and organisations.

On a national as well as on an international basis, experts should find a reasonable strategy in collecting those materials that can give a real view of the practice. Up to now, there is too great a lack of archives and research institutes.

Franz Poeggeler

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Franz Poeggeler:

The History of Adult Education since 1945: Research Problems

The period since the end of the Second World War is now considered the history of the recent past. During these four decades, a great deal has changed in adult education, probably more than in the period of similar length between 1900 and 1945. The changes were brought about less by adult education itself than by politics and the economy in particular: in the development of structures of the same type, such as industrialised states, there is something like a "law of convergence", a certain parallelism or closening of developments. Politics today is only to a limited extent purely national and conducted as an individual state, - it has become more and more an international or super-national matter, an East-West problem, a North-South problem, even a question of worldwide discipline and reason.
This is the backcloth against which the contemporary history of adult education must be considered.

I. Various perspectives of the social history of adult education since 1945

The historiography of education has long since ceased to consider itself a mere history of the ideas and literature of education, but as social history: there is an interdependence of the education system on the one hand and society, politics and the economy on the other. For methodological reasons, it is therefore recommendable to use different historical perspectives of one and the same object:

1) The history of the institutions of adult education allows a fairly easy access. This perspective has to be taken for the simple reason that a large number of new institutions (and with them, new types) of adult education have grown up in the industrialised states during the past forty years.The motives for establishing new ones will have to be studied, but at the same time, an account will have to be drawn up on the older ones, such as the "Residential Colleges", the "People's Universities", the workers' education institutions and further education at universities. Anniversaries have often been the occasion for drawing up a historical account. In doing so, it is not only the history of the individual institution in a certain place that

is at issue but the history of the type of institution of which there are several more. The types of institutions, too, have undergone considerable change.

This was possible primarily because the state permitted a much greater degree of freedom of development to the institutions for adult education than was the case with schools for children and adolescents, which are under complete state control in a number of countries. Institutions for adult education have always been - and still are - more open to reform and change than schools as a result of their relatively large degree of freedom.

2) The history of adult education is, to a much greater extent than that of the schools, a history of personalities in the recent past: individual institutions (older ones as well as newer ones) frequently bear very individual characteristics stamped upon them by charismatic personalities such as founders or heads. There is more scope for individual initiative in founding an adult education institution than in the school system. Creativity, individuality and subjectivity are factors which have played a large part in the recent history of adult education. This is still true if the creative individual is acting on behalf of a group (trades union, church or other institution).

Adult education is a particularly attractive field for highly qualified educators because of the scope for freedom it offers. Of course, there are certain dependencies of the individual on the institution here, too, but it is an advantage for the present adult education system that it has suffered relatively little bureaucratisation or legalisation, at least much less than the school system that has been in existence for thousands of years.

3) The recent history of adult education must be considered as social history for the single reason that a large proportion of the adult education institutions are run by social corporations, for instance trades unions, churches, industrial federations, foundations, women's organisations etc. There has been too little research into the extent to which the new adult education has contributed to forming the spirit and development of social groups.

Thus, the history of trades unions must be considered as history of education as well, and it is important for the most recent church history to see that the churches' clientèle has changed considerably as a result of democratic adult education: even the churches have now to deal with responsible, critical citizens rather than their "docile flock".

4) If viewed from the point of view of state and political history, the history of adult education takes on several nuances:
   - The extent to which democratisation in politics has been achieved as a result of adult education should be investigated.
   - At the same time, the initiatives taken by the political parties to reform adult education should be studied, and
   - the legislation and legal regulations governing the relationship between adult education and the state and aimed at regulating financial and non-financial sponsorship.

   The political history of adult education has had not only a national but also an international dimension, and this has been so for decades.Thus, it is high time to have a critical look at UNESCO policy in the field of adult education.

5) The history of the <u>ideology</u> of adult education after 1945 will have to go into the differences in the changes of objectives in individual states in a much more differentiated way, but at the same time, it must make it clear that here have been international trends in the last four decades. This applies not only to the slogan "Getting on through education", but also to the development of a new "anthropology" of the adult, who now sees himself no longer as a "finished" person, more or less his own monument, but as a "learning person" viewing learning as a lifelong ability and willingness to a critical adaptation to changes in society and also as an impulse to share responsibility for social changes. To this extent, we are dealing with a dynamic, flexible adult, who is considerably distinct from traditional ideas of an adult.

- Of course, the history of ideology in adult education will also have to find out to what extent new intellectual movements (such as different versions of socialism and liberalism) have influenced the objectives and contents of adult education.

6) A new aspect of social historical research into adult education is that of everyday history: in this, we are dealing with the presentation and interpretation of practical adult education, the changes in the number of participants at individual institutions or subject areas, the atmosphere of the rooms used for adult education, successes and failures of the institutions, the echo events have had in the press, radio and TV, the ups and downs of the fame of individual institutions, the coming and going of methods, the opinions of participants on the quality of the educational work. One of the partial problems of everyday history which is not without significance is the etiology of the shrinkage of the number of participants in courses.

Everyday history is also called "worm's eye view" . What is of interest here is not the big ideas and aims, but just everyday routine. Everyday history has to study, among other things, the faults of organisation and management, or the often desperate problems of rooms and buildings.Everyday history is the very kind that is concerned with the effects of education, both positive and negative, and it has a strong empirical orientation. It gets its material not only from official papers and reports in written form, but also from oral reports given by the participants. The "oral method", also known as the "narrative method" has its opportunity here. By means of everyday history understood in this way, we get much closer to the reality of adult education than through a history of education which does no more than evaluate andragogical literature. Such a type of history is often more concerned with programmes and ideas than with facts and effects.

7) The international and super-national involvement of every state in the worldwide system or in global political and economic spheres of influence (East/West, North/South , industrialised states:developing countries) begs the question whether perhaps every modern social history of education must also be a comparative history, in which not only the differences but also the common elements of intellectual structures, political systems and economic conditions are sought. Up to now, inter- or super-national experiments in education historiography have been rare, such as some initial work on a European history of adult education. Perhaps there is still a lack of important basic conditions in collecting historical material (documents, literature, statistics etc.) It should, nevertheless, be clear to each and every expert that any purely national, single-state perspective simply cannot do justice to reality, especially in adult education, because the ideas, the objectives and the methods of further education "emigrate" across state boundaries and have become the communal property of political and intellectual large regions.

II. Tendencies for the Future of Adult Education

Is the historian a competent person to forecast the future of adult education ? All he can do with an easy conscience is to describe the development tendencies of today's adult education that are pointing towards the future. Of course, it is not certain how long these tendencies will last - maybe only a few years, or perhaps several decades. Political, economic and ideological events which can never be foreseen and occur out of the blue can cause a completely different picture to arise for the future of adult education.

The following tendencies are evident today in the system of adult education practised in western industrialised states:

1) The importance and extent of adult education will increase in the future, because children and adolescents will more and more become a minority as a result of the low birth rate. The consequence of this will be that institutions for the education of children and adolescents will decrease, whilst those for adult education will increase. The number of teachers for schools for children and adolescents will be decimated, whereas there will be more staff for adult education institutions.

2) As the proportion of people over 50 in the population will continue to increase, interest in adult education will shift from younger to older adults. The subjects offered and methods used in adult education will have to adapt to older people.

3) Vocationally-oriented adult education will be weighted more and more heavily, whilst at the same time general and vocational adult education will merge together more than has been the case hitherto. This tendency need not necessarily reduce the importance of general adult education, however.

4) Pragmatism will come more strongly to the fore in the adult education of the future to the extent that the interest of participants in obtaining certificates and qualifications will increase.

5) This links in to the tendency towards taking school leaving qualifications within adult education. The early warning that adult education is "turning into school" will remain acute in the coming years.

6) The tendency already in existence in further education politics to create organic transitions from school for children and adolescents on the one hand to adult education on the other will probably improve the chances of a great many citizens to acquire education. Adult education will be understood even more than is already the case today as an integral part of the democratic education system.

7) The organisational structure of adult education will be filled out much more than it has been. Existing institutions will be given more suitable buildings and better management than has been the case. At the same time, however, new "alternative" institutions will grow up, e.g. as a result of the influence of the ecology and peace movements or the increase in the proportion of older people in the population as a whole.

8) There is also a tendency to increase the number of adults taking part in further education from the present eight to ten per cent of the adult population in industrial societies, thereby addressing new target groups.

9) The present professionalisation of the education staff in adult education will probably continue for another decade or two, as the proportion of professionals in relation to part-timers is still too low.

10) Adult education in universities, at present rather under-developed in many industrialised countries, will probably be extended and will gain influence in relation to other sectors of adult education. In addition to research and teaching, adult education will then be practised as one of the regular functions of a university.

Of course, the question always arises when forecasts are made as to the extent to which future development can be politically planned - and for what period? Experience in the last two decades has taught us that education planning can influence developments only for the medium term at the most, i.e. for approximately five to eight years. Even then, the success of education planning depends on whether political and economic developments are favourably positive.

III. On the strategy of future historical research into adult education

It is high time that experts come to an agreement on the strategy that can best be employed to achieve international and supernational research into adult education as a supplement to national. Even at national level, many of the basic conditions are not given in the way they exist for the field of the history of school education, for instance archives and collections. I know of no European country where there is a really representative central archive for adult education, never mind a European one. There is a lack of the necessary staff resources in terms of educational historians in the university institutes of andragogics, so that there have only been isolated studies or summary run-downs up to now on the history of adult education in individual states. Experts from as many countries as possible should agree on what materials should be collected and catalogued in each separate country for archiving. The following should be considered first and foremost:

1) Legal sources (legislation, state decrees, statutes of individual associations and institutions for adult education; bilateral state agreements).

2) Programmes and curricula of the institutions. (A programme archive can only be used if the work schedules and programmes of the institutions are collected with genuine continuity and with no gaps.)

3) Minutes and reports of important meetings and conferences etc.; annual reports for the institutions.

4) Statistics: It is incomprehensible that many organisers of adult education have never kept precise statistics for decades - and some of them are still not too diligent with regard to statistical accuracy. One important point is this: the organisations running adult education institutions should get together - beyond state boundaries - and agree on the same methods of collecting statistical data so that true comparison is possible.

5) Personal Details: One good thing is that since the seventies there have been initiatives to set up biography bibliographies of im

portant experts in the field of adult education. This work requires the establishment of numerous personal data archives with the papers of deceased personalities. Many of the papers left by famous adult educators have disappeared without trace or are only fragmentary.

6) Picture and photo archive: the visualisation of the history of adult education imparts a particularly clear and well-defined image of the past. Pictures of all kinds (photographs, films, video films etc.) should be related not only to important personages but also to everyday practice. One sector of the pictorial archive should be the collection of outdoor and indoor pictures of adult education institutions, and at the same time a collection of architects' plans for these institutions.

7) Audio tapes: Written items often give only a pale surrogate picture of reality. Recordings on tape, however, (including conversations with participants and organisers) give, by contrast, a more subjective but more genuine impression of learning practice.

8) Press, radio and TV reports: In the same way as work schedules at the institutions are collected, media reports should be taken into account because they provide evidence for the effects of educational work.

9) Sources for certain sectors: e.g. workers' education, education for parents, civic education etc.: these more thematically oriented sectors can provide a great deal of material for special archives. There are archives for workers' education here and there, but there are no comprehensive archives on other sectors.

10) Literature of adult education: this is often difficult to get at, with the exception of a few standard works. This applies, for instance to anniversary writings published on the occasion of birthdays celebrated in certain institutions. There is no complete archive of dissertations on adult education yet, either.

The collection and evaluation of publications on adult education has not yet even overcome the first hurdle, which is language, especially as publications in the less widely-read languages

receive no international recognition, even if their contents are significant. What is published in English, French or Russian is often a matter of coincidence. An international commission of experts should make an annual selection of new publications which would be worth translating into the world languages. "Abstracts" with the essential contents should be made of every important new publication in one of the major languages. This of course would require a world-wide communication system for andragogic research. Such things are already functioning in the field of medical or physics research, and it should also be made possible in the future for research into adult education. The first step in this direction is the willingness of the experts to co-operate internationally.